

Analysis

Shake-up fogs U.S. policy

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Washington—Suddenly, as such things are judged, the administration's foreign policy appears to be in disarray following President Ford's reorganization of his national security staff.

Some of the problems doubtless are more of appearance than of substance, and some will right themselves. Some may suggest cause and effect where none exists. Others plainly are subject to the salve of diplomacy.

But the list is long enough to be discouraging to Mr. Ford and Henry A. Kissinger, his Secretary of State, with the approach of an election year in which foreign policy surely will be vigorously and even bitterly debated.

Most of the substantive issues are chronic ones in varying degrees. None the less Mr. Ford has left many of his own diplomats uncertain of his purpose after the so-called Sunday night massacre of three weeks ago.

Several loose ends are still dangling from the reorganization. After removing Mr. Kissinger's second hat as assistant to the President for national security affairs, he has yet to say who will head important intelligence and policy committees.

One aspect of the reorganization, the appointment of George Bush as director of central intelligence, has come under heavy criticism from Democrats in Congress. In fact, there are some suggestions that Mr. Bush, former chairman of the Republican National Committee, may not be confirmed.

Still on the domestic side, Congress is becoming increasingly crotchety with both Mr. Ford and Mr. Kissinger. The most recent manifestation is the contempt citation from a House subcommittee over the secretary's refusal to hand over internal administration documents on intelligence.

Here, too, in the judgment of some diplomats, Mr. Ford reacted uncertainly by delaying his claim of executive privi-

lege. Earlier this week, Mr. Kissinger felt compelled to warn that chipping away by Congress could undermine the administration's authority in foreign policy.

The secretary doubtless recognizes that he has become part of the problem on Capitol Hill, if only because of familiarity. He is still vastly popular with the public. But more and more members of Congress recall his understatement of his

role in wiretapping his own staff members, in the collapse of the Allende government in Chile, and in the planning of covert intelligence operations generally.

What worries Mr. Kissinger most, apparently, is that all this will leave the U.S. impotent, or cause it to appear impotent, on important foreign policy issues. Clearly the most important range of issues, for the long term, concerns Soviet-American relations.

The strategic arms limitation treaty has become the most visible symbol of the current uncertainty. Republicans to the right of Mr. Ford and many conservative Democrats are vocally suspicious of the whole detente process.

Mr. Ford's discharge of James R. Schlesinger, his Secretary of Defense, has given the doubters a highly respectable ally, for Mr. Schlesinger already has served notice that he intends to speak out for strong defenses with deep skepticism about Soviet goals.

Publicly Moscow continues to extol detente. Privately Soviet officials express tolerance for the excesses of American election-year rhetoric—within undefined limits.

But at the same time Moscow continues to pursue openly its support of the farthest-left

faction in the Angola conflict, despite the warnings of Mr. Kissinger. In Portugal, Communist forces continue to struggle for supremacy with Moscow's encouragement.

In the Middle East the administration may face the severest test yet of its diplomacy. By most assessments, the current cease-fire between Israel and Syria will be sustained for the time being. But what happens after that is uncertain.

If Mr. Kissinger cannot restore political motion toward a settlement, he will have reinforced the argument of critics who claim he erred by satisfying Egyptian interests separately from those of more militant Arab forces. In this view, Egypt's moderating influence should have been applied elsewhere.

No doubt some of the problems, at least the appearance of those within the administration, will be resolved soon. But the substantive ones remain, fuel for divisive debate.

One senior U.S. diplomat regards the current uncertainty as a reflection of the issues raised by the American defeat in Vietnam. "A lot of people have been influenced by it, at home and abroad, without realizing it," he said. "But it basically is a question of self-confidence and inspiring confidence in others. We have a long way to go."